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SUBJECT: TURKEY HOSTS POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS ON  
BLACKSEAFOR

1. MFA hosted political consultations among Black Sea Force (BLACKSEAFOR) participants in Ankara on January 19. The joint press communique (para 2 below) explains that the group decided to focus BLACKSEAFOR activities on fighting terrorism. They also discussed the need to protect the Black Sea from organized crime, illegal trafficking and WMD proliferation, and decided to examine increasing the frequency of BLACKSEAFOR activations from one to two per year. We received a copy of the communique on the margins of the February 18 Joint Staff Talks.

2. Begin Text of Press Communique:

Representatives of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of participating States to the BLACKSEAFOR Agreement (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine) met in Ankara on 19 January 2004 for political consultations upon the invitation extended by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey under Article VI of the BLACKSEAFOR Agreement. The Commander of BLACKSEAFOR was also present at the meeting.

The representatives exchanged views on the newly emerging security environment in and around the Black Sea Region.

In this context, they underlined the strategically important location of the Black Sea in terms of political, economic and security circumstances in Europe and its wider environs.

The representatives reaffirmed their common understanding that security in the Black Sea constitutes primordial importance for the littoral states and that therefore they should take primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and stability in the area through the engagement of their common assets and capabilities. They underlined the fact that BLACKSEAFOR is an already available instrument, which can be used for the achievement of this objective through various means compatible with the overall aims of the BLACKSEAFOR Agreement.

The representatives shared the assessment that the Black Sea area should be protected against threats and challenges such as terrorism, organized crime, illegal trafficking and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In this context, they emphasized the need to fight against terrorism within the framework of the BLACKSEAFOR Agreement.

The representatives reiterated their resolve to further intensify cooperation in the areas specified in the BLACKSEAFOR Agreement.

The representatives emphasized the importance of the full and effective implementation of the document on "Confidence and Security Building Measures in the Naval Field in the Black Sea" as a substantial contribution to the consolidation and enhancement of peace and stability in the area.

The representatives agreed on the need to further examine the frequency of the activation of BLACKSEAFOR on the basis of two or more activations per year with a view to enhancing interoperability within the Force.

The representatives exchanged views on cooperation in information sharing, employment of command/control/communications capabilities, training opportunities through exercises and other tasks that may be contemplated in the future for enhanced cooperation among the participating States to the BLACKSEAFOR Agreement.

The representatives underlined that the activities of BLACKSEAFOR are undertaken in full transparency. They agreed to seek achieving synergy with other international security institutions and regional initiatives, as appropriate.

Political consultations will continue in the future. While keeping the option of an earlier meeting open, the representatives welcomed the kind offer of Ukraine to host the next consultations meeting at the end of 2004 or the beginning of next year.

End text.  
EDELMAN